

The Moment Of The Real Presence In The Lord's Supper

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Outline

- I. Confessional Lutheran Agreement
- II. Differences on the Moment of the Real Presence
- III. Historical Survey of Lutheran Teaching
 - A. Martin Luther
 - B. Martin Chemnitz
 - C. C. John Saliger
 - D. The Lutheran Dogmaticians and the Synodical Conference
 - E. The Lutheran Confessions
- IV. Recent Discussions Among Confessional Lutherans
- V. Scriptural Testimony on the Topic
- VI. Conclusions

I. Confessional Lutheran Agreement

Confessional Lutherans of all generations and locations agree on three things concerning the Lord's Supper.

First of all, confessional Lutherans agree that the true body and blood of Christ are present in the Lord's Supper together with the bread and wine. There is a "sacramental union." The body and blood of Christ are orally received by all communicants. The words of institution are to be taken in their natural meaning when they say, "This is my body."

Secondly, confessional Lutherans agree that the words of institution are to be used in every celebration of the Lord's Supper. Jesus said, "This do." That means we should repeat the words and actions of the first Lord's Supper as closely as possible.

Thirdly, confessional Lutherans agree that these words of institution are consecratory. As a minister speaks the *verba*, he is a representative of Christ. The *verba* are efficacious because of the promise and power of Christ. The words of institution are not read simply to present the history of the Sacrament's origin, as the Reformed say.

Lutherans agree on these three things, in part, because the Formula of Concord speaks very clearly about them. The Formula of Concord in Epitome VII,6 says, "In the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine." The Solid Declaration VII,79 says, "In the administration of the Holy Supper the words of institution are to be publicly spoken or sung before the congregation distinctly and clearly, and should in no way be omitted."

SD VII, 75 says, "The true and almighty words of Jesus Christ which He spake at the first institution were efficacious not only at the first Supper, but they endure, are valid, operate, and are still efficacious so that in all places where the Supper is celebrated according to the institution of Christ, and His words are used, the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received, because of the power and efficacy of the words which Christ spake at the first Supper."

No matter whom you read among confessional Lutherans (and there is no shortage of Lutheran writings on the Lord's Supper - cf. the bibliography!), these three truths are confessed. There is a real presence, the words of institution are necessary, and the words of institution are consecratory.

II. Differences on the Moment of the Real Presence

Confessional Lutherans have differed, however, in expressing themselves specifically about the moment at which the real presence in the Lord's Supper begins.

There are four different views which can be found.

1. Consecrationism: Some Lutherans insist that the real presence in point of time most certainly begins with the consecration as the *verba* are read. These consecrationists, as they are called, do not mathematically set the moment by selecting a syllable. However, they say that it is appropriate to fix the moment in general with the consecration. Since the Word of God is powerful, they argue that the Word must immediately produce its effects in the Lord's Supper. They say it is Lutheran to talk about the body and blood on the altar and in the pastor's hand.

2. Receptionism: Some Lutherans insist that the body and blood of Jesus are present only when communicants receive the elements and not before. These receptionists, as they are called, still consider the *verba* of the consecration to be efficacious. However, they say that the effect of the *verba* is not instantaneous in time. Since the Lord's Supper is an action, they say that the real presence takes place only as the action of eating and drinking is carried out.

3. Open Question: Some Lutherans say that the entire issue is an open question. They say that the Scriptures do not fix the moment of the real presence, and that the Lutheran Confessions also do not make it a

point of doctrine. These Lutherans say that the body and blood are most certainly present when the elements are received. Perhaps the body and blood are present earlier, but we can't know for sure.

4. Moment not fixed, but prior to reception: Some Lutherans speak in similar language as the Lutherans in category #3 but add the thought that the real presence must take place at some point prior to the reception. Though the moment is not fixed, they say that receptionism is not a possibility.

III. Historical Survey of Lutheran Teaching

These differing views on the moment of the real presence can be observed as one makes a survey of Lutheran teaching over the years.

A. Martin Luther

What did Luther say on the topic?

First of all, it is evident in Luther's writings that the moment of the real presence was not a burning issue for Luther. The *Great Confession* of 1528 is Luther's *magnum opus* on the Lord's Supper, his "last word" on the topic. As one reads the *Great Confession*, it is obvious that Luther's main concern is maintaining the real presence against the Sacramentarians. He stresses the literal meaning of the *verba*, and the power of the *verba*. He is not concerned to establish "how" the sacramental union takes place or "when." All we have from Luther on the topic of the moment are some passing comments.

Receptionists are quick to find some passing comments which seem to favor their view. One favorite is a letter from Luther to Carlstadt in 1528 in which he wrote, "Now you would again bring up to us that miserable old question concerning the moment of the presence according to which, as the papists teach, Christ's body is there at the last syllable (of the words of institution) and not before. We despise these thoughts and prescribe no certain moment or time for God, but we are satisfied simply to believe that what God has said certainly happens."¹ Some receptionists say a case could be made that Luther was a receptionist.

Consecrationists are quick to find passing comments of Luther which favor their view. In *The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ - Against the Fanatics* of 1526, Luther wrote, "For as soon as Christ says: 'This is my body,' his body is present through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. If the Word is not there, it is mere bread; but as soon as the words are added they bring with them that of which they speak."² In his writing *That these Words of Christ, "This is My Body," etc, Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics* of 1527, Luther wrote, "This is his Word, when he says, 'This is my body,' just as he says in Genesis (1:3) 'Let there be light,' and there is light. My friend, it is God who names or calls, and what he names immediately comes into existence, as Psalm 33:9 says, 'He spoke, and it came to be.'"³ In the much discussed Wolferinus letter of 1543, Luther says, "We shall define the time of the sacramental action in this way: that it starts with the beginning of the Our Father and lasts until all have communicated, have emptied the chalice, have consumed the hosts, until the people have been dismissed and (the priest) has left the altar."⁴

A fair reading of Luther in regard to this topic suggests that he was not a receptionist. In his passing comments he sounds like a consecrationist who refuses to pinpoint the syllable in the way that the Roman Catholic Scholastics had. Once again it must be said, however, that he in general was not concerned about determining the moment of the real presence. He was concerned rather about the fact of the real presence and the power of the Word in effecting it.

¹ Gaylin Schmeling, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*, *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), p. 28.

² Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*. Vol. 36 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), p. 341.

³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*. Vol. 37 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1961), p. 117.

⁴ Schmeling, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

About the moment, Erlandsson says, “He never made a doctrinal article out of this by which one can test faithfulness to the Bible and on the basis of which one can carry on doctrinal discipline.”⁵

B. Martin Chemnitz

It is natural also for Martin Chemnitz to be considered in this survey. In 1570 he wrote a book entitled De Coena Domini to defend the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence. His Examination of the Council of Trent, Part II, finished in 1573, has over 300 pages in the English translation devoted to the Lord’s Supper. He also was one of authors of Article VII of the Formula of Concord.

Where does Chemnitz stand on the moment of the real presence? Chemnitz, in short, comes across as a clone of Martin Luther. His Lord’s Supper writings have the same emphases; they use the same arguments and the same Bible references. What was said about Luther can be said *mutatis mutandis* about Chemnitz.

Chemnitz, in other words, cannot be claimed as a receptionist. Some passing comments hint of consecrationism. But determining the moment of the real presence is outside of his main concern. What is striking is how little is said about the topic in the hundreds of pages of available reading! One at most can find passing comments, and often the topic only comes up as he quotes church fathers.

Two quotes from Chemnitz shall suffice. In Examen 2:248, Chemnitz writes,

The meaning is not that the blessed bread which is divided, which is offered, and which the apostles received from the hand of Christ was not the body of Christ but becomes the body of Christ when the eating of it is begun. For the whole action of the institution hangs together, and the words, “This is My body,” belong to the entire action...Christ, God and man, is present in the total action of the Supper instituted by Him.⁶

The “total action” by Chemnitz’s definition is the consecration, distribution and reception. So Chemnitz is not a receptionist.

But read also Question #251 in Ministry, Word and Sacraments, An Enchiridion. The question is asked,

When the consecration has been performed, as they say, or the words of institution have been recited over the elements, are the body and blood of Christ present, even if the elements are neither offered nor received, but are laid up, enclosed, or carried about?

His answer in part is:

Christ says of that which is blessed, which is offered, received, eaten and drunk: “This is My body, this is My blood. Therefore when the bread is indeed blessed but neither distributed nor received, but enclosed, shown and carried about, it is surely clear that the whole word of institution is not added to the element, for this part is lacking: He gave it to them and said, Take and eat. And when the word of institution is incomplete, there can be no complete Sacrament.”⁷

The entire action is needed for the real presence, according to Chemnitz.

⁵ Seth Erlandsson, *The Danger of Presumptuous Questions about the Lord’s Supper*, Translated by S.W. Becker from Biblicum, 4-5, 1977. p. 9.

⁶ Martin Chemnitz, Translated by Fred Kramer, Examination of the Council of Trent, Part II (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), p. 248.

⁷ Martin Chemnitz, Translated by Luther Poellot, Ministry, Word, and Sacraments, An Enchiridion (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), p. 121.

C. John Saliger

Associated with this topic is a German pastor in the 1560s by the name of John Saliger. While pastor at Lübeck in 1569 and Rostock in 1569, Saliger insisted on consecrationism. He demanded that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper the moment the consecration is said, and started a controversy with his teachings and temperament.

The controversy was brought to a close in October, 1569 when the "Wismar Recess" or the "Mecklenburger Edict" was issued, of which Chytraeus was the main author. This document is very similar to the Formula, of Concord. It says,

The blessing, as some name it, or the recitation of Christ's Words of Institution by itself, where the whole action of the Supper as Christ ordained it is not observed...does not make a Sacrament ...The whole action or administration of the Sacrament ...must be kept unseparated and inviolate ...In this complete, inseparable action of the Holy Supper...Christ is truly and essentially present and distributes and delivers His true body and blood with the bread and wine, since the true presence of Christ's body and blood is not to be denied for the reception.⁸

The upshot of the controversy was that Saliger was deposed because he refused to accept the Edict.

Curiously, this historical event is interpreted differently by consecrationists and receptionists. Recent consecrationists such as Tom Hardt, B. W. Teigen, Jobst Schöne, and Hermann Sasse say that Saliger was deposed not because of false doctrine, but because of his polemical spirit and the "papistic" way he expressed himself.⁹ The traditional understanding has been that false doctrine was involved. Traditionally it has been explained that the Lutheran fathers did not want to fix the moment in the way in which Saliger did, and this led to a parting of ways. It is significant to note in this regard, that the Formula of Concord, which had the Saliger controversy in the background, did not speak in Saliger's terms about the moment.

D. The Lutheran Dogmaticians and the Synodical Conference

Continuing in the survey of Lutheran teaching, it is important to note that the Lutheran dogmaticians of the 17th century starting with Aegidius Hunnius uniformly taught receptionism. Also the guiding lights of the Synodical Conference in America, uniformly taught receptionism.

Here is a sampling of quotations.

Aegidius Hunnius: "As the bread is the communion of the body of Christ only in the act of eating and not before, so too, the bread is not sacramentally united with the body till this communion and this reception takes place."¹⁰ (It is interesting that Hunnius in 1592 was called to Wittenberg to restore Lutheran orthodoxy in Saxony and he had a reputation of being a staunch "gnesio-Lutheran" against the "Melancthonians").

Leonard Hutter (+ 1616): "The purified church...teaches that no sacramental union takes place until the external use is added, which consists in eating and drinking."¹¹

John Gerhard (+ 1630): "The repetition of that primeval institution, made by the minister of the Church, is not merely historical and doctrinal, but also consecratory; by which, according to the appointment of Christ, the external symbols are truly and efficaciously set apart to sacred use, and in the very act of distribution become the communion of the body and blood of Christ."¹²

⁸ Gaylin Scheling, *The Saliger Controversy*, Lutheran Synod Quarterly, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (June, 1987), p. 42-43.

⁹ Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body*. (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1977), p. 141.

¹⁰ Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Volume III (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), p. 373.

¹¹ Heinrich Schmid, Translated by Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), p. 573.

¹² Ibid., p. 574.

John Quenstedt (+ 1688): “This sacramental union itself does not take place except in the distribution; for the elements, bread and wine, do not become portative media of the body and blood of Christ, until during the distribution they are eaten and drunk.”¹³

C.F.W. Walther: “The sacrament has not yet been effected by the mere reading of the words of institution, if in addition the consecrated elements are not also distributed to communicants and received by them.”¹⁴ Walther then quotes Quenstedt and Hunnius.

Adolf Hoenecke: “This union (the sacramental union) occurs through the words of institution. Quenstedt however adds immediately that the sacramental union occurs *only in the distribution*. Bread and wine are not bearers (*Träger*) of the body and blood of Jesus Christ before they are eaten and drunk. The word of Jesus proves this to be right: ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ The dogmaticians for this reason call the union which occurs in the consecration a ‘preclusive’ union, that is, its result first takes place in connection with the action of eating and drinking.”¹⁵

Franz Pieper: He quotes Quenstedt, Hunnius and Walther.

Harold Wicke: “Dr. A.C. Piepkorn, Professor at Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, has repeatedly advocated the false teaching that the body and blood of Christ are actually present on the altar after the consecration of the elements and prior to their reception by the communicants.”¹⁶

All of these Lutheran teachers are quick to say that the real presence is still effected by the words of institution. These teachers do not depotentiate the *verba*. They say, however, that the *verba* do not effect the real presence immediately during the consecration.

E. The Lutheran Confessions

Finally, we need to consider the Lutheran Confessions.

The Confessions give two principles in regard to the moment of the real presence. Luther in the Large Catechism quotes the Augustine axiom: “If the Word be joined to the elements, it becomes a Sacrament.”¹⁷ The Formula, of Concord SD VII,85 quotes as a useful rule: “*Nihil habet rationem sacramenti extra usum a Christo institutum.*” (“Nothing has the nature of a sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ.”)

With these principles the Confessions teach that the real presence is effected by the words of institution, but “the recitation of the words of institution of Christ alone does not make a sacrament if the entire action of the Supper, as it was instituted by Christ, is not observed” (SD VII, 83). The Confessions thereby nicely avoid the extremes of overemphasizing either the consecration or the reception. The Confessions, however, do not give a clear-cut, definitive statement on the moment of the real presence.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Confessions are quoted by both consecrationists and receptionists. For example, Augsburg Confession X says, “The Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord.” Consecrationists will say that this teaches that the body and blood are present prior to the distribution. Receptionists will say that this teaches that the body and blood are present when it is distributed and received.

Think through the following statements of the Formula, of Concord. Isn’t it true that they could be quoted by receptionists and by consecrationists?

E VII, 6: We believe, teach and confess that in the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 573.

¹⁴ C.F.W. Walther, *Pastoraltheologie* (St. Louis, 1875), p. 174. Translated by Seth Erlandsson, *The Biblical and Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (April, 1977), p. 108.

¹⁵ Adolf Hoenecke, *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik*. Band IV, (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1909), p. 127. Translated by the author.

¹⁶ Harold Wicke, *Catechism of Differences* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1964), p.67.

¹⁷ *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), p. 755.

SD VII, 76: “The words are spoken by the mouth of the priest, but by God’s power and grace, by the Word, when He speaks ‘This is my body,’ the elements presented are consecrated in the Supper” (Quotation from Chrysostom).

SD VII, 77: “His command and institution have this power and effect that we administer and receive not mere bread and wine, but His body and blood.”

The truth is, that the Lutheran Confessions do not define the moment of the real presence. The Confessions simply ascribe everything to the Word and then say that what is present and received is the body and blood of Jesus. Some confessional Lutherans insist that the Confessions teach consecrationism. Three hundred years of confessionally minded Lutherans (including Walther, Pieper and Hoenecke) have read the Confessions and taught receptionism. This diversity among Lutherans who read the Confessions carefully indicates that the Confessions do not speak definitively on this point.

Also a comment should be made about SD VII, 41. The Formula says, “The proper meaning and sense of the oft-mentioned Augsburg Confession can and should be derived from no other source more properly and correctly than from the doctrinal and polemical writings of Dr. Luther.” Some have argued on the basis of this statement that we are confessionally bound to Luther’s opinions about the moment (which we have previously seen were never fully developed or stressed). It would certainly go beyond the intent of the Formula, however, to make every comment which Luther ever made about the Lord’s Supper confessionally authoritative for Lutherans. What about his comments about the chronological accuracy of Luke’s gospel and the consumption of the *religua*? The context in SD VII, 41 is talking about the fact of the real presence, which is also the concern of Augsburg Confession X. The fact of the real presence (not the moment) is what Luther defended in great detail, and for this topic Luther should be consulted for deeper understanding.

So the scorecard for Lutheran teachers is this: Luther and Chemnitz do not make an issue of the moment but lean toward consecrationism in passing comments. A controversial and later deposed Lutheran named Saliger stressed consecrationism in the 1560s. From the 1590s on, the chief confessional Lutheran teachers taught receptionism. The Confessions can be read either way.

IV. Recent Discussions Among Confessional Lutherans

This whole issue is before us, now, because the last twenty years has seen a reopening of the Saliger controversy. A number of confessional Lutherans have written articles and books which insist that consecrationism is the correct Biblical and Lutheran teaching. Included among these writers are Jobst Schöne in Berlin, Tom G. A. Hardt (pastor of a small, unaffiliated Lutheran congregation in Stockholm, Sweden), Bjarne W. Teigen (retired professor at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, MN), and the former’s nephew, Erling T. Teigen (also a professor at Bethany). Affected particularly by the recent discussions have been the LCC (Lutheran Confessional Church in Scandinavia) and the ELS (Evangelical Lutheran Synod).

The happenings in the LCC are well known by readers of the Northwestern Lutheran.¹⁸ At the LCC’s 13th annual convention, on July 25, 1987, the Chairman of the LCC, Pastor Per Jonsson, with members of the LCC who agreed with him staged a walkout. They separated themselves from the LCC because of doctrinal differences on the Lord’s Supper and the public ministry. Specifically on the matter of the Lord’s Supper, the breakaway group insisted that after the consecration the bread is Christ’s body, “whether it rests on the altar, or the pastor holds it in his hand or it reaches the communicant’s mouth.”¹⁹ The LCC lost about 75 souls in the walkout, and after the walkout numbered about 300 souls.

In the ELS, discussions on the Lord’s Supper have been going on continually since the late 1970s. In 1981, nine theses on the Lord’s Supper were produced by the Doctrine Committee of the ELS. These theses

¹⁸ Richard Lauersdorf, *A Historic Convention in Sweden*, The Northwestern Lutheran, Vol. 74, No. 17 (Oct. 1, 1987), p.328-331.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 329.

were found to be in complete agreement with the WELS Statement. However, the discussion continued in the ELS after 1981.

Discussion intensified as Prof. Hjarne Teigen published a book entitled The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz in 1986. In this book Prof. Teigen argues that Chemnitz was an ardent consecrationist who "wants to make the matter very clear that on the basis of Christ's own words one can and must fix the point within the sacramental *usus* when the presence of Christ's body and blood begins."²⁰ The constantly recurring theme of the entire book is that the body and blood are present immediately after the words of consecration.

This book has rightfully received criticism in a number of book reviews. Schmeling of the ELS gently says, "One will have a very hard time accepting all the conclusions of Dr. Teigen concerning the effects of the consecration."²¹ E. F. Klug accuses Teigen of riding his "hobbyhorse" on consecrationism.²² Gawrisch states that this study is skewed by the author's preconceived notions.²³ J.A.O. Preus, the translator of Chemnitz's De Coena, writes,

Teigen is trying to use Chemnitz to prove something which interests Teigen, but did not interest Chemnitz in the same way. The result is a somewhat tortured handling of the second Martin, who nowhere makes the moment of the Real Presence a high priority item...It appears to be counterproductive to try to use an author who four hundred years ago was speaking on one subject to support an entirely different subject. Teigen is grasping at straws to enlist Chemnitz to his support.²⁴

This past summer saw a significant development in the ELS story. At their synod convention in June, 1989, the delegates reaffirmed the 1981 Theses with a new six-point statement in explanation of Thesis Nine. The entire document is attached as Addendum I in this paper. Of special interest is explanatory statement "b": "Because of this consecration Christ's body and blood are present in the elements of bread and wine before the reception of the elements by the communicants." The ELS thereby is in category #4 according to the categories used in the beginning of this paper. The ELS does not fix the moment, but they say the presence is certainly there prior to the reception. The leaders of the ELS are optimistic that this 1989 resolution has ended the controversy in their midst.

The WELS CICR (Commission on Inter-Church Relations) has been involved with these developments both in the LCC and in the ELS. In 1980 the CICR prepared a statement on the moment of the real presence which has been used in the discussions. This statement is attached as Addendum II. The WELS statement is in category #3. It considers the matter to be an open question. The concluding points read:

4b) While we cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental *usus* when the real presence of Christ's body and blood begins, we know from Scripture and acknowledge in the Confessions that what is distributed and received is the body and blood of Christ.

4c) The Confessions do not assert more as a point of doctrine than the above, which is clearly taught in Scripture.

²⁰ Bjarne W. Teigen, The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz (Brewster, MA: Trinity Lutheran Press, 1986), p. 100.

²¹ Gaylin Schmeling, *Book Review on "The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz,"* Lutheran Synod Quarterly, Vol. XXVI, No. 2, June, 1986, p. 72.

²² Eugene F. Klug, *Book Review on "The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz,"* Concordia Theological Quarterly, Vol. 51, No. 1, Jan., 1987, p. 54.

²³ Wilbert Gawrisch, *Book Review on "The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz,"* Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. 84, No. 2, Spring 1987, p. 159.

²⁴ J.A.O. Preus, *Review Essay on "The Lord's Supper in the Theology of Martin Chemnitz,"* Concordia Journal, Oct., 1987, p. 343-344.

The WELS says that at some point in the *usus* (perhaps at the consecration, perhaps as late as the reception) the real presence is effected. We don't know precisely when.

Also attached as Addendum III is a statement prepared by the joint faculties of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Seminary, Springfield in 1959. This statement clearly recognizes the moment of the real presence to be an open question.

IV. Scriptural Testimony on the Topic

So what is a person to do with this complicated issue?

As with all issues of faith and life, one must go back to the Bible. Let us look at what the Scriptures say about the moment of the real presence, and then draw some final conclusions.

The Lord's Supper, of course, receives direct discussion in only five passages of Scripture. Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:19-20 record the institution on Maundy Thursday. 1 Corinthians 10:16-21 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-30 give Paul's instructions to the Corinthians. An examination of these passages reveals three things which can be said about our topic.

First of all, 1 Corinthians 10:16 indicates that the elements in the Lord's Supper are to be blessed or consecrated. Paul refers to τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν ("the cup of blessings which we bless").

Now there is some discussion in this passage about the word εὐλογέω. In the accounts of the first Lord's Supper, εὐλογέω is used as a parallel to εὐχαριστέω. Matthew 26:26 says that Jesus took bread and εὐλόγησας ἔκλασεν. Luke 22:19 says Jesus took bread and εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν. Εὐλογέω can mean "to praise or thank." The NIV translates "the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks" in 1 Corinthians 10:16.

However, all the other New Testament passages where the verb εὐλογέω means to "thank" or "praise," God is the expressed or implied direct object. In 1 Corinthians 10:16, the cup is the direct object of εὐλογέω. When people or things are the object of this verb elsewhere in the New Testament, it then takes on the meaning "to bless, to call down God's gracious power." The NIV probably translates the way it does because of Reformed influence. 1 Corinthians 10:16 is best taken to mean, "The cup of blessing which we bless." Paul implies that we are to bless the earthly elements.

But Paul in this passage does not spell out what words are to be used in this blessing. What words should be used?

Certainly it is natural for Christians to use the words of institution. With his command, "Do this," Jesus makes it clear that he wants us to repeat the words and actions of the first Lord's Supper. "Do this" means that we should repeat the very words of institution which Jesus used. And these words function well as a blessing or consecration.

E VII, 8 even goes so far as to make it a confessional matter:

We also believe, teach, and confess unanimously that in the use of the Holy Supper the words of institution of Christ should in no way be omitted, but should be publicly recited, as it is written, 1 Cor. 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless," etc. This blessing occurs through the recitation of the words of Christ.

A second thing to note in the Scriptures is that the words of institution were spoken by Jesus only during the distribution at the first Lord's Supper.

Note carefully the sequence of verbs in Mark 14: λαβῶν ἔρτον εὐλόγησας ἔκλασεν καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εἶπεν Λάβετε τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα μου ("he gave it to them and said..."). In Matthew 26 it reads: δὸς τοῖς μαθηταῖς εἶπεν ("having given to the disciples he said"). In Luke 22 we have: ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων ("he gave to

them saying”). Jesus spoke the words “This is my body” only after he had started and while he was giving the bread to his disciples.

In part, what is behind the whole moment of the real presence issue for us is the fact that we have taken these words of institution out of the distribution and we use them earlier as a consecration. We establish a time interval between the *verba* and the distribution which was not there in the first Lord’s Supper. Then we speculate about the real presence in that time interval which we have created.

Now it has been said above that we use the *verba* as a consecration for good reason. However, we must remember that at the first Lord’s Supper the words of institution were spoken only while the disciples were receiving the elements. Most certainly, therefore, the real presence is guaranteed in the reception. The Bible doesn’t tell us about the condition of the elements in the time interval which we have established between consecration and reception, because this time element was not a part of the first Lord’s Supper.

This leads us naturally into the third observation which one can make upon examination of the Scriptural accounts. The third observation is simply that the moment of the real presence is not a concern in any of the Biblical texts.

The words of institution, which are the *sedes doctrinae* for the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, deal with “what” the Lord’s Supper is, and not with “how” and “when” the real presence takes place. Because these words of institution were spoken during the distribution at the first Lord’s Supper, the topic of the precise moment was in no way a concern.

Also 1 Corinthians 10:16 (“Is the cup of blessing which we bless not a communion with the blood of Christ? Is the bread which we break not a communion with the body of Christ?”) does not define the moment of the real presence. It does not intend to say that the cup instantaneously is the blood upon the consecration, any more than it intends to say that the body is present from the moment of the breaking on. This passage is discussed at length in both Luther’s *Great Confession*²⁵ and in the Formula. of Concord (SD VII, 54-59) to defend the real presence. Neither Luther nor the Formula use the passage to define the moment.

VI. Conclusions

The Scriptural evidence leads me to the conclusion that the WELS CICR Statement charts the safest course on this topic. Since there is no clear passage of Scripture to fix the moment of the real presence, it is best to leave it an open question completely. The WELS Statement is careful not to say more than the Scriptures. It wisely does not try to establish doctrine without a clear proof passage in God’s Word.

Quite frankly, I would be very happy to be consecrationist - if adequate Scriptural proof could be offered. I would be very happy to say that the real presence must be there prior to the reception - if adequate Scriptural proof could be offered. Saliger and all consecrationists after him, however, used debatable historical arguments to a much greater degree than Biblical evidence to defend their position. I simply do not see adequate Scriptural proof to define the moment of the real presence any more precisely than the WELS Statement. The Bible never makes an issue of the moment, and Jesus spoke the words, “This is my body” while the disciples were receiving it.

The WELS Statement does not take away from the power of the Word. Statement 4a says: “The real presence is effected solely by the original words of institution spoken by our Lord (*causa efficiens*) and repeated by the officiant at his command (*causa instrumentalis*).” It is still the Word which effects the presence. The WELS Statement simply allows for the possibility that the Word spoken in the consecration might bring about its results at a later point in the *usus*. This is proper. Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply,” is sometimes quoted as an example of an efficacious Word of God which has produced and is still producing its results after its utterance. There is no reason to insist as a point of doctrine that the Word of God in the Lord’s Supper must produce its results immediately upon its utterance.

²⁵ Martin Luther, Luther’s Works, Vol. 37. pp. 348ff.

As I was preparing this paper, more than one individual hinted to me that the entire assignment was a regrettable waste of time. That brought to mind the words of Chytraeus (one of the authors of the Formula of Concord) during the Saliger controversy. In a letter to Saliger on April 18, 1569, Chytraeus called the controversy which Saliger had begun unnecessary and a mark of “presumptuousness.” He wrote, “Since it is sufficient for the pious heart to know from the Words of Institution that the bread which is presented to me by the minister is the true body of Christ, of what use is it to dispute about the bread that lies on the paten or is left after the reception.”²⁶ Certainly it seems regrettable that confessional Lutherans find themselves struggling among themselves and expending time and energy on such an issue, when all around us there are Lutherans who are losing the doctrine of the real presence completely, and more importantly, there are souls who need us to bring them the message of the Savior.

Yet it must be said that no point of doctrine in the faith is insignificant. It is also true that the moment of the real presence has a long history of discussion in the church (even before the Reformation). For me it was a privilege to study this portion of the faith, and I rejoice to say that my understanding of the Sacrament and my appreciation of the Sacrament were increased in the process. It is my hope that God will use this controversy and paper also for others in the same way.

²⁶ Schmeling, *The Saliger Controversy*, p. 41.

Theses on the Lord's Supper by the Doctrine Committee of The Evangelical Lutheran Synod

On the basis of the Words of Institution (Matthew 26:26,27; Mark 14:22,24; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25) and other Scripture passages concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16,17 and 11:26-29,

1. We hold with Luther that "(the Sacrament of the Altar) instituted by Christ himself is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink" (Small Catechism VI, Tappert Edition).
2. We hold that "in the Holy Supper the two essences, the natural bread and the true natural body of Christ, are present together here on earth in the ordered action of the sacrament, though the union of the body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine is not a personal union, like that of the two natures in Christ, but a sacramental union..." (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII 37,38).
3. We hold that this sacramental union is in effect during the *usus* or *actio*: "Nothing has the character of a sacrament apart from the divinely instituted action (that is, if one does not observe Christ's institution as he ordained it, it is no sacrament). This rule dare not in any way be rejected, but it can and should be profitably urged and retained in the church of God. In this context 'use' or 'action' does not primarily mean faith, or the oral eating alone, but the entire external and visible action of the Supper as ordained by Christ: the consecration or words of institution, the distribution and reception, or the oral eating of the blessed bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ" (SD VII 85,86).
4. We hold that "it is the institution of this sacrament, performed by Christ, that makes it valid in Christendom, and that it does not depend on the worthiness or unworthiness of the minister who distributes the sacrament or of him who receives it, since, as St. Paul says, the unworthy receive the sacrament too. Therefore (we) hold that, where Christ's institution and command are observed, the body and blood of Christ are truly distributed to the unworthy, too, and that they truly receive it" (SD VII 16).
5. We hold that it is the almighty Word of Christ "which distinguishes it from mere bread and wine and constitutes it a sacrament which is rightly called Christ's body and blood... When (if) the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament... The Word must make the element a sacrament: otherwise it remains a mere element" (Large Catechism V 10).
6. We hold that "No man's word or work, be it the merit or the speaking of the minister, be it the eating and drinking or the faith of the communicants, can effect the true presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper. This is to be ascribed only to the almighty power of God and the Word, institution and ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ" (SD VII 74).
7. We hold that the Words of consecration repeated by the minister in a proper celebration of the Sacrament are the effective means by which the real presence of Christ's body and blood is brought into being. "For wherever we observe his institution and speak his words over the bread and cup and distribute the blessed bread and cup, Christ himself is still active through the spoken words by the virtue of the first institution, which he wants to be repeated.... No human being, but only Christ himself who was crucified for us can make of the bread and wine set before us the body and blood of Christ. The words are spoken by the mouth of the priest, but by God's power and grace through the words that he speaks, 'This is my body,' the elements set before us in the supper are blessed... This his command and institution can and does bring it about that we do not distribute and receive ordinary bread and wine but his body and blood, as his words read, 'This is my body,' etc., 'This is my blood,' etc. Thus it is not our work or speaking but the command and ordinance of Christ that, from the beginning of the first Communion until the end of the world, make the bread the body and the wine the blood that are daily distributed through our ministry and office." Again, "Here too, if I were to say over all the bread there is, 'This is the body of Christ,' nothing would happen, but when we follow his institution and command in the Lord's Supper and say, 'This is my body,' then it is his

body, not because of our speaking or of our efficacious word. but because of his command in which he has told us so to speak and to do and has attached his own command and deed to our speaking” (SD VII 75-78).

8. We hold that “the words of institution are to be spoken or sung distinctly and clearly before the congregation and are under no circumstances to be omitted. Thereby we render obedience to the command of Christ, ‘This do...’ And thereby the elements of bread and wine are hallowed or blessed in (for) this holy use, so that therewith the body and blood of Christ are distributed to us to eat and to drink, as Paul says, ‘The cup of blessing which we bless,’ which happens precisely through the repetition and recitation of the words of institution” (SD VII 79-82).
9. We hold that we cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental *usus* when the real presence of Christ’s body and blood begins, yet we know from Scripture and we acknowledge in the Confessions that what is distributed and received is the body and blood of Christ.

Six-point statement added in May, 1989 to clarify Thesis Nine:

We understand Thesis Nine in the light of the following statements:

- a) The words of consecration effect the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in a valid administration of the Lord’s Supper (consecration, distribution and reception).
- b) Because of this consecration Christ’s body and blood are present in the elements of bread and wine before the reception of the elements by the communicants.
- c) We reject any attempt to fix the mathematical point or exact moment when the real presence begins.
- d) We reject the teaching that the presence of Christ’s body and blood is in any way effected by the eating and drinking of the elements by the communicants.
- e) We reject the doctrine of transubstantiation, i.e., that the earthly elements cease to exist when the real presence of Christ’s body and blood begins.
- f) We reject any celebration of the Lord’s Supper without communicants.

**Statement of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod**

In the matter under discussion we need to study Christ's words of institution in Matthew, Mark, Luke and in 1 Corinthians; as well as St. Paul's additional statements about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 and 10. On that basis we can establish the following concerning the essence of the *usus* of the Lord's Supper (consecration, distribution, reception):

1. The real and substantial presence of Christ's body and blood during the *usus*.
2. The sacramental union of bread and wine and of Christ's body and blood during the *usus*.
3. The oral manducation of bread and wine and Christ's body and blood by all the communicants during the *usus*.
4. The real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the *usus* is brought about solely and alone by the power of Christ according to the words of institution, that is, by his command and promise.

We accept this statement (Point 4) with the understanding that:

- a) The real presence is effected solely by the original words of institution spoken by our Lord (*causa efficiens*) and repeated by the officiant at his command (*causa instrumentalis*);
- b) While we cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental *usus* when the real presence of Christ's body and blood begins, we know from Scripture and acknowledge in the Confessions that what is distributed and received is the body and blood of Christ.
- c) The Confessions do not assert more as a point of doctrine than the above, which is clearly taught in Scripture.

The Moment Of The Real Presence In The Lord's Supper

A Statement of the Joint Theological Faculties of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and Concordia Seminary, Springfield.

May 2, 1959

1. Scripture is silent with reference to the "moment" of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, for 1 Cor. 10:16 relates the sacramental union to the total sacramental action.
2. According to the Formula of Concord (VII 83), the Lord's Supper is a sacrament only when the elements are consecrated and the directives in Christ's command *This do* are executed. The paragraph reads:

This blessing, or the recitation of the words of institution, of Christ alone does not make a sacrament if the entire action of the Supper, as it was instituted by Christ, is not observed (as when the consecrated bread is not distributed, received, and partaken of, but is enclosed, sacrificed, or carried about), but the command of Christ *This do* (which embraces the entire action or administration in this Sacrament, that in an assembly of Christians bread and wine are taken, consecrated, distributed, received, eaten, drunk, and the Lord's death is shown forth at the same time) must be observed unseparated and inviolate, as also St. Paul places before our eyes the entire action of the breaking of bread or of distribution and reception, 1 Cor. 10:16. (English translation from *Triglot*, p. 1001.)

3. The Formula of Concord does not, however, fix the moment when the sacramental union takes place. It rather lashes out in severe language against speculative questions dealing with the "when" and "how" of the sacramental union. "When and how does the body come into the bread? How long does the sacramental union last? When does the body cease to be in the bread?" See *Bekennnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherschen Kirche*, 2d ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), p. 1016, n.4, for a list of such questions as had appeared in Kurtz *Bekennntnis*, 1571, a forerunner of the Formula of Concord. See also Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), pp. 164-176. The condemnatory statement in the Formula of Concord (VII 127) reads: "We reject and condemn also all presumptuous, frivolous, blasphemous questions and expressions which are presented in a gross, carnal, Capernaïtic way regarding the supernatural, heavenly mysteries of this Supper." (English translation from *Triglot*, p.1015)
4. In view of the above considerations (silence of Scripture regarding the "moment" of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, and statements quoted from the Formula of Concord) Lutheran theologians, whether they be in the preaching or teaching ministry, will be careful not to ask or evoke "presumptuous, frivolous, blasphemous questions" regarding the mystery of the "moment" of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper, lest Christian consciences be disturbed and Satan be given an opportunity to sow the seed of discord in the church. Lutheran theologians need constantly remember that the chief emphases in the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper are those succinctly expressed in the statement of the Small Catechism: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Which words, besides the bodily eating and drinking, are the chief thing in the Sacrament and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."

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